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LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

January 14, 2002

Special Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medical Practitioners
Division of Professional Licensure
239 Causeway Street, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Commission Members:

The Special Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine is about to complete its discussion and analysis of the issue before it and I want to express my appreciation for the work of all of the members. The question of whether practitioners of complementary and alternative medicine should be licensed does not lend itself to an easy answer. Members of the Commission brought to the discussion their own deeply held values and viewpoints and as a result, the discussion among the members of the Commission has been very spirited.

Unfortunately, the chasm between those in favor of licensure and those opposed is too wide and long to allow ready crossing. Consequently, it is my understanding that the Report the Commission will issue today will take the form of a "majority and minority report." The first part of the report will contain analysis and conclusions found by a majority of the Commission to recommend licensure of "naturopathic practitioners." The second part of the Report will contain analysis and conclusions which conclude that licensure of naturopathic practitioners is not recommended. In between these two stark positions, there is considerable room for compromise, which, regrettably, this Commission has not been able to negotiate.

My concern from the outset has been that while some forms of alternative and complementary medicine have gained wide acceptance by the general population and have even found favor among a few traditional physicians, the main concern of the Legislature must be to ensure that the safest and most reliable forms of medicine are given the Commonwealth's approval. Authorizing the licensure of "naturopathic

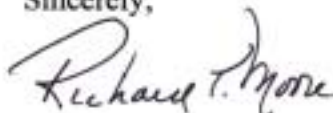
practioners" simply because more and more people are utilizing their services is not a persuasive argument; and resorting to the adage, "let the buyer beware" is least, appropriate in the field of medicine.

However, I have been persuaded that naturopathic practitioners are sincere advocates who, in most cases, will guide their patients to the appropriate course of treatment whether that be in their discipline or in conventional medicine. Because the advocates for complementary and alternative forms of medicine agree that traditional medicine should be used when the diagnoses warrants it, I would have agreed with a recommendation for licensure that created a partnership between conventional physicians and naturopathic practioners. Such a partnership, however, would necessarily have to take the form of a supervisory role for conventional physicians.

As I have stated previously in my communications with the Commission, for me to support the licensure of naturopaths, I would need to be satisfied that appropriate safeguards are in place to assure that fringe elements of the naturopathic discipline do not gain legitimacy for their unproven and untested practices. Moreover, I also need assurance that even the more well documented alternative and complementary medicine practices are dispensed with a commitment to sound and safe medicine. One way to assure these protections is to implement the above described partnership with conventional physicians acting as the safeguard.

Neither Report issued by this Commission moves us toward the model I have described above. For that reason I will abstain from signing the Final Report as written but, as the issue is sure to, again, come before the Health Care Committee and eventually the Legislature as a whole, will make use of its analysis and conclusions in future deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Richard T. Moore". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

RICHARD T. MOORE

Senate Chair, Committee on Health Care